



### **Week 3**

**March 15**

**Rev. Jan Sattem**

**Good Shepherd Church**

**Ruth 1:16**

*Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you, for where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge.*

In the book of Ruth, a Jewish couple with little faith left their national country due to a famine. Naomi, the wife, ended up burying her husband Elimelech (whose name means "God is my judge") and her sons. One daughter-in-law returned to her homeland, but one, Ruth, admired Naomi's God. Ruth was a Moabitess. Naomi tried to convince her to return, but Ruth uttered the now famous words, "Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you, for where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge."

To utter those words took unusual courage and great discernment on the part of Ruth. Remember Elimelech had left his countrymen to go where he thought the food would be plentiful. Instead, both he and his sons died there. Now as Ruth comes back to his homeland, this daughter-in-law broadcasts a disobedience in their family. They had intermarried! She is humbled by her circumstances! The two women find themselves at the mercy of the general Jewish population

Noami gleaned a field for food, and it turned out that Boaz, the landowner, was a single, older man and a relative of Naomi's. Naomi encouraged Ruth to signify that she would willingly marry this relative. Boaz, perhaps, was stunned that such an attractive and godly woman of integrity would consider him. He agreed to take the steps necessary to redeem and then marry her.

What was inside Boaz that he would do that? What motivated Boaz to such kindness? His parents must have had unusual love for outsiders. It turns out that is exactly true. You see, his mother was Rahab— yes, Rahab the harlot. Boaz had seen assisting the immigrant modeled by his own mother's life. Let's recall also that both women are in the genealogy of our Savior.

#### Questions for Further Study

1. What does today's passage teach us about the character of God?
2. What are some other passages of Scripture that also teach us this?
3. How does today's passage and devotion lead you to pray? How does it lead you to act?

**March 16**

**Rev. Joe Donahue**

**Providence Reformed Presbyterian Church**

**Acts 9:21**

*Is not this the man [Saul] who made havoc in Jerusalem of those who called upon this name!*

What was He thinking? Surely He had the foresight to anticipate the volatile situation He was creating when He put together His cabinet, a leadership team comprised of radically disparate and potentially contentious personalities. No, it's not the current administration in Washington I have in mind, but Jesus, and the cabinet He recruited. Consider *the Twelve* – those men whose leadership was foundational for the Church from that point on, and whose fellowship would be something of a microcosm of the Christian community. While yes, they had a lot in common, they also differed at a number of vital points, differences which were especially notable when one considers the incredibly reckless move (by our standards) in putting Simon the Zealot and Matthew the Publican in the same room! But a similar tension was felt when Saul, now *Paul*, walked into the Jerusalem church, where it was said, "Is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem of those who called upon this name!" (Acts 9:21) Not unexpectedly, his attempt to join their fellowship was hindered because, as Luke informs us, "they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple." (v. 26)

And so it is that, after 20 centuries have passed, we find ourselves in the same awkward position of wanting to be welcoming to the 'stranger' that comes knocking at our door, but with deep-seated reservations, because of the threat he poses. While the threat we perceive today is often for our physical safety, it also extends to our commitment to

cultural preservation or church tradition. My church is no exception, and it took having a Muslim-background-believer stand up and testify to his love for Christ, and seeing the waters of baptism drench his brow, that enabled our congregation to see people of his cultural background (he is Kurdish) as something other than a threat. While it is not something we would have dreamed of just a few years ago, the richness of seeing others – including women dressed in black from head to toe – sit at table with us during a fellowship supper or even sit through a worship service, is something that we all agree has enriched us immeasurably. What a wonderful providence, that God has blessed us to taste of the richness we will experience when in glory with Him.

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#### **March 17**

**Rev. John Casteel**

**The Bridge ARP Church**

#### **Ephesians 4:1-6**

*I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.*

In Ephesians 4:1-6, when Paul urges us to “walk in a manner worthy of [our] calling,” he begins by telling us to treat one another in the church with humility, gentleness, and patience. Humility is thinking of others and putting their needs first, being about others rather than yourself. Gentleness is about consideration for others' rights before our own. Gentleness is about what we choose to say, think, and do with other people. Patience is not just being good at waiting; it's about having a restraint that allows for others' shortcomings and endures wrong without anger or vengeance.

Here's how this relates: these three traits are essential in a multicultural church and in multicultural ministry. It is easy for us to assume we know what other people's problems are rather than to have the humility to hear from them about what they need and then seek to speak into and meet that need. Humility also allows us to hear the ways that they are able to challenge us and the gifts that they offer to us, rather than

thinking ministry only goes in one direction. It is also easy for us to become offended by people who are different from us, but this often stems from a lack of gentleness - putting our rights and desires above those of others, including our brothers and sisters who are different from us. And patience will give us the ability to deal with people who are different from us and whose sin struggles are different from ours, and it will help us recognize that we need their patience for us too. Multicultural ministry is hard, and we need the humble, gentle, patient Savior to move and work in all of our lives if we are to move forward as one body, the multiracial, multilingual, multicultural, global church of Jesus Christ.

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**March 18**

**Rev. Matt Miller**

**Erskine Theological Seminary**

**Multiculturalism and Catholicity**

**Rom. 15:7**

*Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.*

Every Lord's Day, most ARP congregations profess "the holy catholic church" (several profess "the holy universal church") in the Apostles' Creed. But how well are we living out what we profess?

Paul urged the church in Rome, a mostly Gentile congregation faced with an influx of Jewish Christians, to "welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God" (Rom. 15:7). This challenging call required bringing together believers from different backgrounds, postures and preferences. To that end, Paul labored in Romans 14 to help the congregation set aside their "likes" for the sake of real "loves"—their love for the Lord and for each other.

As they put aside their "likes" for the sake of real "loves," that church in Rome became a more multicultural congregation. Or, better put, that multicultural congregation became a new, otherworldly culture—a culture that transcended national, ethnic and racial divisions. This otherworldly culture would later be described by the word "catholic"—a remarkable achievement of the Spirit as He unites different peoples into the same

Christ, through whom they call upon “one God and Father, who is over all and through all and in all” (Eph. 4:6).

Theologian Herman Bavinck writes: “This catholicity of the church, as the Scriptures portray it for us and the early churches exemplify it for us is breathtaking in its beauty.” But then he warns: “Whoever becomes enclosed in the narrow circle of a small church or conventicle, does not know [this catholicity] and has never experienced its power and comfort. Such a person shortchanges the love of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the fellowship of the Spirit and . . . will have an impoverished soul.”

If we find ourselves so “enclosed,” may the Lord help us put aside our “likes” for the sake of real “loves,” so that we may “welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you . . .” (Rom. 15:7).

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**March 19**

**Micah Candeletta-Burklin**

#### **Matthew 28:18-20**

*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*

I recently had the privilege of attending the annual “Kingdom Advisors” conference in Orlando, Florida at which David Platt was the opening session speaker. He told a detailed story of a Syrian family who had been forced from their home and about their journey searching for security in Europe - a similar journey that millions of other refugees are experiencing. Platt mentioned that we are currently facing unprecedented opportunities for the Great Commission to move forward. There are not only tremendous physical needs that must be met but also deep spiritual needs across the span of this refugee crisis.

God is not surprised or shocked by any of what is happening. There are no divine accidents, as He constantly remains sovereign over all things. It is so easy for us to ask why these horrific tragedies are occurring. However, I believe this is the wrong question

to pose. Rather, let us seek and tune into what God may be calling us to. Doors are opening for the gospel to speak life into the lives of millions of refugees from once closed countries. We, as the global church, have opportunities to meet the physical needs of these refugees and share the hope of eternal life as Christ commands us. It is the gospel that transforms lives and gives hope for a future, especially in such a broken world and among such horrid circumstances.

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**March 20**

**Mr. Michael Evans**

**Greenville ARP Church**

#### **Leviticus 19:33-34**

*When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.*

I see stories on a daily basis about how different we are from one another. But I wonder how different we really are? Sure, we see visible differences or perhaps even behavioral differences. However, each human being is made by God and in His image (Gen 1:27). From the beginning, God commanded His people in Leviticus 19:18, "to love your neighbor as yourself." This was then closely followed by a command in Leviticus 19:33-34, "to treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt..."

My family and I experienced this first hand when we moved to France. On our first day, I met a man who would end up helping our family in many ways during our expatriation. Remi was a colleague who became family. Everything was so different from the culture we knew, and I clung to Remi for help. We had a basic grasp on the language, but many things we just didn't understand. His help included the most simple of tasks like how to ride a bus to helping explain cultural misunderstandings. Even with the help of a large company behind us, those differences caused a lot of stress. The impact of Remi and his family's generosity wasn't even realized until later.

Remi understood the concept of helping others and demonstrated it. Loving our neighbor, whether the people living near us or the refugee from another part of the

world, is a commandment given to us. We have opportunities every day to make large and small impacts. Loving a refugee will transform not only their life but yours in the process. Go and minister to your neighbors, and hopefully in the process bring a brother or sister to Christ.

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**March 21**

**Kathryn Dushime**

**Neely's Creek ARP Church**

**Story:**

She was 16. Our relationship was both longstanding and newfound. Longstanding because I first met her years earlier as a child in the ministry I had worked with, and newfound because God knit our hearts together as I stood with her in the greatest struggle of her life. She had become pregnant through no fault or choice of her own. Nothing but a bleak future stood before her and her unborn child. It was in this time that God called me to her side. Never before have I been given such love and compassion for someone who had essentially been a stranger. What could I do for her? How could anything I did make a difference when I was in Rwanda for under three weeks?

To that, God said "Feed the hungry." It was within my means to meet some very immediate physical needs, so my husband and I did just that. It so happened in God's great sovereignty that my brother was sponsoring this precious one. So as we delivered food, we also got to bring words of hope and encouragement from her sponsor across the world. I stood in her home with her in my arms and my husband relayed these words through tears that God said, "Bring hope to the hopeless." My heart was forever lost to her that day. The Lord allowed me to be the vessel of His intense, pursuing love of her.

Through simply listening to her story, acknowledging her wounds, and committing to a continued relationship, she felt like someone truly loved her for the first time in her life. She began to believe that the God she had prayed to saw her even in her shame. Christ's hope started to be a light in her smile. While my intention was always to support her in every way possible from home, what I didn't know was that hugging her before I left

would be the last time I would get that opportunity this side of heaven. Disease took her from us only three months later, but not before she delivered and loved on her beautiful baby boy. I wrestled with my God over this loss. I mourned for the life that could have been. I cried for her son who was without the one person he had in this life. And I wondered. I wondered why God connected me to her with so much love to pour out but for such a short season. Why did I have to mourn this? Why did I have to feel so immensely for someone just to lose her? While I knew that I would never regret showing her His love and seeing the change in her heart, I just felt so let down that this was the end. It wasn't happy. It wasn't what I hoped for.

I can't say I have gotten all the answers I have wanted from God, but moving forward He says to me, "Care for the orphan." Before she died, she got to know that we were committed to her and this little life she bore. She knew that we intended to do all we could to help provide for her son. In the end, he was her greatest concern, and God allowed me to be used to bring her peace.

Does God need us to accomplish His plans? No. Does He use us? Absolutely! We are the privileged when He does. So as you follow Christ, spend yourself in loving in His name and for the sake of the gospel. Allow Him to pour into you a love for others that is beyond your understanding. It will require sacrifice. It may leave you with aches and tears you didn't ask for. You will never regret it!

"We love because he first loved us." 1 John 4:19